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UNCLAS VATICAN 000774

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/WE-LEVIN; AF/E-GAREY; AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL SO VT

SUBJECT: SOMALIA: HOLY SEE URGES NGO PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. A) MARTIN-GAREY FEB 26 TELCON

1B. B) MARTIN-KAYPAGHIAN FEB 26 TELCOM

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Summary and Guidance Request  
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1. (SBU) The Holy See requested U.S. support in encouraging the Government of Italy and other interested parties to support the inclusion of the Italy-Somalia Forum for Peace and Reconstruction in the Somali peace negotiations. In a February 25 meeting with poloff, Vatican Country Director for Somalia Lucio Sembrano described the current state of the Somali peace negotiations as critical. Sembrano urged the U.S. to reassure Ethiopia and Somalia's other neighbors that a stable Somali government was in their best interest, and that they should support the ongoing negotiations. We understand that this reflects current USG policy. Please see guidance request at para. 6. End Summary.

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Vatican: Situation Urgent...  
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2. (SBU) Vatican Country Director for Somalia Lucio Sembrano told us February 25 that the Holy See considered the Somali peace negotiations to be at a critical juncture, and requested U.S. support on two fronts. As an indication of the urgency with which the Vatican sees the situation, Sembrano noted that the Vatican had intended to have its Foreign Minister raise the situation with the Ambassador, but instead decided to contact poloff to convey the information as soon as possible.

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...and Precarious  
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3. (SBU) Both Sembrano and a non-paper he passed us (faxed to AF/E and EUR/WE) noted the precarious state of current negotiations, noteworthy progress notwithstanding. The Holy See ascribes some of the difficulty in making further progress to the exile of former Somali officials and intellectuals over ten years ago. According to the Vatican non-paper, this left the nation with a "total lack of human resources and professional skills which are absolutely necessary for the success of any lasting and sustainable peace-making and reconstruction plan." With current plans underway for appointments to a Somali parliament, the Holy See believes now is the time to involve a wider array of such people in the negotiating process.

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Italy-Somalia Forum Should Have Role  
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4. (SBU) According to the Holy See, the Italy-Somalia Forum for Peace and Reconstruction should have a role in the peace talks and in negotiations on the development of Somalia's transitional government. The Vatican's non-paper reports that the Forum developed its own initiative to mediate among the various groups participating in the talks -- a process that showed great promise. The Forum has reportedly involved and mobilized "the best intellectual and professional Somali(s)," most of whom are living in exile. The Holy See believes it could be a useful tool for the international community in the reconstruction of Somalia, and concludes that the Forum's involvement "cannot be postponed indefinitely" and should be implemented in the shortest possible time.

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Holy See Requests USG Help  
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5. (SBU) The Holy See asked for U.S. assistance in two ways:

-- According to Sembrano, the Government of Italy has been lukewarm on the Forum's involvement in the Somali crisis. The Holy See requests that the U.S. approach the GOI and other relevant members of the international community to encourage their support of Forum participation in the peace negotiations.

-- The Holy See also encouraged USG contact with the Government of Ethiopia to impress upon the GOE that Somali reconstruction is in its own long-term interest. The Vatican asked the USG to encourage the GOE and other Somali neighbors not to disrupt Somali peace efforts. Post understands the USG is already engaged on this front and is attempting to work with the international community to address the GOE's legitimate security concerns, while still making the point that a stable government in Somalia will be good for Ethiopia (ref a).

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Guidance Request  
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16. (SBU) Post is attempting to get more information on Forum membership and modus operandi from its leadership in Rome that we will forward to Department (ref a). We are also in contact with Embassy Rome on the issue (ref b). Post requests guidance from Department to respond to the Holy See on the two issues raised in paragraph 5.

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